

Middlebury College Organic Garden

Advisor's Report for 2011

Internships

Through the generous support of alumni gifts and earned income from the garden's produce sales, the Middlebury College Organic Garden was able to offer full time summer internships to four undergraduate students: Sara Bachman ('13.5), Ari Lattanzi ('13), Allie Weinstein ('13) and Carly Shumaker ('13). We also hired two spring/fall interns: Jenny Marks ('13) and Leslie Reed ('13).

New Projects

The garden continued expansion to the southeast. Four new rows of raspberries and blackberries were added. These crops are very popular at the student run fall farm stand on campus.

The summer interns built a new fire pit that would be the center point for groups meeting at the garden and the garden as a social space. The interns worked with master stonemason Thomas Vanacour (a Middlebury College alumnus) to construct a dry stone wall for the fire pit from very large blocks of Panton Stone.

Production Garden

Our wheat production project was in its second year. A 200' x 50' section of the garden was devoted to winter wheat which was self-seeded from a cover crop in 2010. The plot was harvested by a local farmer, Lee Forgues using his 1905 vintage McCormick Reaper to harvest the wheat. The wheat was threshed and winnowed using old time equipment by Lee in fall 2011. Students had the opportunity to work with Lee during the harvest. Some students also harvested a smaller crop of wheat with hand tools.

Despite very rainy spring and fall season the garden produced a bumper harvest in almost all crops. In an experimental contractual agreement with Middlebury College Dining Services the garden interns grew large amount of tomatoes and basil that were processed by Dining Services into sauce and pesto respectively. This is a model Dining hopes to use with local farmers in the future.

Farm visits

Each summer the interns and I visit a variety of farms. Each focuses on different crops, business models and management systems. This year we visited the Crawford Family Farm (producers of Vermont Ayr cheese), Golden Russet Farm (organic vegetables and greenhouse plants), the Elmer Farm (organic vegetables), Champlain Valley Bees and Queen's (honey and nuclear colonies), Foggy Meadow Farm (sustainably grown vegetables), the farms at the Intervale in Burlington, Lincoln Peak Winery (run by Middlebury alumni Chris and Michaela Granstrom), Cate Farm (run by Middlebury alumni Richard Wiswall), Good Companion Farm (grain and bread), Bread and Butter Farm (run by Middlebury alum Corie Pierce) and the organic farm at Green Mountain

College. Thanks to all of these generous farmers who gave so much of their time to show us their operations and answer our questions.

The Organic Garden in the News

Rutland Business Journal had a story about the 25th Anniversary of Otter Creek Bakery and how for the last 9 years they have bought produce from the Middlebury College Organic Garden.

Gardeners in the Community

Reunion 2011

The Organic Garden hosted a tour for alumni. 60 alumni came to our 2011 tour and spent time with the interns and advisor learning about the production methods of our garden. The most consistent comment we hear is “I wish we had this garden when I was attending Middlebury”.

Faculty at the garden

The Organic Garden as a Resource to other colleges and universities

Each year students and faculty from other colleges and universities inquire about the Middlebury College Organic Garden. They consistently ask for information that will help them create or sustain their own college gardens. This year I received inquiries from: Stanford University, Bennington College, St. Lawrence University, Salem College (NC), University of Arkansas, Alaska Pacific University.

Academic Connections

Members of the MCOG student group worked with faculty to develop an outline for a new minor in Food Studies. The proposal has advanced to the College’s curriculum committee.

The MCOG student organization organized the Campus Cultivation Conference held in April, 2011. This was a food studies oriented conference. The following is the schedule for the conference.

April 29

7:30-8pm, Axinn 232

Registration and screening of the film **Lunch Line**.

April 30

10-11am, Axinn 229

Keynote address by **Susie Walsh**, program director at the UVM **Farmer Apprentice Program**. Susie has been farming and teaching since she graduated from Oberlin College

in 2000. She has managed a diverse set of farm education projects from a large vegetable CSA to a one-acre school garden. In her work at The Food Project in Boston, The Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley and most recently coordinating Farm to School work in Vermont schools, Susie thrives on connecting people to their food and the land it comes from. She loves the sight of steam rising from the compost pile, the taste of over-wintered spinach in early spring and the humbling feeling that there is always more to learn about farming. Susie lives in Montpelier with her husband, daughter and five lucky chickens.

11:05am-12pm, Axinn 229, 219, 220

Session 1: Farm Show and Tell In this session each college will give a short presentation in the history of their garden or farm and describe the institutional structure and mission.

12-1:30pm, Axinn 229

Lunch, catered by Middlebury's student run Crossroads Cafe, and free time.

1:30-2:30pm Axinn 229, 219, 220

Session 2: Sales and Marketing Where does your food go? In this session we will discuss the challenges associated with sales and marketing, with special attention to retail sales to students and faculty.

2:35-3:30pm Axinn 229, 219, 220

Session 3: Volunteering and Student Participation Getting new students to volunteer can be difficult. We will discuss productive ways to keep students involved with garden activities, especially in the winter months.

3:35-6pm outside of Axinn center

Tours depart for the Middlebury College Organic Garden at 3:35pm.

6pm the garden

Dinner, bonfire and music!

The MCOG student organization also organized a film festival focusing on food studies issue. The movies included **Dirt, Colony, and Ingredients**.

Visitors to the garden in 2011

Six Middlebury College Faculty members used the garden for integrating sustainability into their curriculum. Classes from the Psychology, Plant Biology, Geography, Religion, Teacher Ed and Dance departments were held at the garden in spring and fall of 2011.

A group of 20 College and University Environmental Educators from the US and Canada visited the organic garden to have a dialog about how gardens can best teach sustainability.